Interview with

RUTH KING

At her home

Sea Level, North Carolina

Interviewed by Lily Johnson and Tara Hinton on July 16, 2024

Transcribed by Lily Johnson

Down East Change Project

RUTH KING: Okay.

LILY JOHNSON: And they retired there in the ’90s.

RK: Okay.

LJ: And I’ve been coming to and from Harkers Island.

RK: And where are you from?

TARA HINTON: I'm from Sylva.

RK: Okay.

TH: So, very near Cherokee.

RK: Yeah.

TH: And been at the museum for a year now, but a student at Chapel Hill, and just interning at the museum learning about the environment here, because I'm an environmental student, we both are.

RK: You really need to read up on my company that I work for.

LJ: Yeah, I just wrote it down.

RK: Yeah, McGill Environmental Systems. I'll give you my card, if you mind, before you leave.

TH: Yes, please!

RK: I'm very proud to work for him, I've known the owner, he's from Ireland, and we've been in business in North Carolina for, gosh, 35 years now, and I met him when he first came here, because he is now married to my best friend of 50-plus years. So anyway, compost is a lot for the environment, not only—and my kitty cat, Lucky, is in the kitchen right here, come here, girl. I went 32 years with no animals. The last guy dated had a toy Yorkie and a Rottweiler. I don't miss him at all, but I miss the dogs. And I don't know, about five years ago—in ’20, I decided in ’20 I wanted a dog again. My other dog, who lived 17 years, and died in 1990—I had him 17 years, was an Eskimo Spitz. So you know, he was about 20-25 pounds, white fur. But these little dogs are easy, you can travel with them, whatever. So I started looking for one, and but I found a lady outside of Raleigh who was a breeder, but she lived in a nice house all that, but still, he—for two and a half years of his life he was in a crate, eating, sleeping, and having sex. He never had grass under his feet till he came here, she had artificial turf. Breeders wash it, you know, so—leave her alone. So anyway, I got him. So July, early July of ’20. By November first of ’22, the lady that helps me around here, in my house and stuff, had been complaining about a pet rabbit that somebody had put out in the wild down here in Atlantic, and that he was eating their flowers. And down

here, when somebody says he's gotta go, I said, “Well, if you catch the rabbit, I'll take it.” Thinking rabbit [could be] Shrimpii’s friend. So, I was coming back from Ocracoke for Halloween on November 1, and they called me, I was on the ferry. They said “We've got the rabbit.” I said, “Okay, I have nothing for a rabbit.” So I put him out here on the back porch. The second week of December ‘22, the Methodist minister called—on Facebook, was begging somebody to take a five-month-old female rabbit that one of his kids had dropped off. Thought, “Well, I'll get a rabbit for the rabbit.” Again, I didn't have anything for them, but just, I put her out there, and they went like this, and then he went back there. And so, February ‘23, five babies were born, but they all got good humps.

So, Christmas Eve day of ‘22, I go to the Dollar General or something, but I go down into this bridge to look at nature a lot, and stuff. And there was this cat, and it was cold that Christmas here, and she was shivering. So I went back, got a bag of food, fed her. I sit here Christmas Eve night by myself, and I said, “God, it's one of your creatures. If it's meant to be, it'd be.” Whatever. So, Christmas day, about midday, I go down there with that bag and the cat carrier, and, you know. She was, her head was in the marshes. This foot was in there, and that foot was back here. And I shook that bag, and she looked over at me, and I shook it. She came and went all around my feet. I picked her up. She went on her back and went [clicking noise with mouth]. Brought her home. So, truer is for her. So anyway, I went from none to like four. Well, and then with the five babies, that's how many was that? Four and five? Nine? It was crazy. And then, I had a hutch for them, and had a little pen out there on front porch. I felt kind of bad about being in there and, oh God, hair and hay. So then I just started letting them run loose, and they shit everywhere, and they chewed everything. So this spring, they have a beautiful house—uh, cage, but it's all covered. Ground all over, their hutch is out there. They're getting a good breeze, because even out here on this porch in summer, they weren't getting the breeze they're getting underneath that shade tree. And they get fed, I've got a chair in there to talk to them, and Shrimpii goes in, and I have my porch back.

TH: We saw as we were walking in, and we were like, “Chickens?” But nope!

RK: Nope, they're rabbits, and their names are fla—the male rabbit, who's—he's a lion's head, is Flounder, and she's Lola, from Lola Road on Cedar Island. Shrimpii, because Shrimpii’s sire name was Mighty, like Mighty Mouse. And the lady who went with me—I said, “He's going to the beach. He's got to have a [beachy name].” So, I was going like, Crab, Spot, Mullet, you know? I said, “He's so tiny.” I said, “How about Shrimpii?” I said, “Is it -i, -e, or -y?” And the lady with me, who was a really unique woman, she says, “-ii.” So he became Shrimpii—Shrimp-ii. And she was helping me take care of him, probably like July-August of ‘20, because I was having hip issues, and eventually had surgery, and she passed away, but in a diabetic coma. She would go house-sit for dogs and stuff, but it's so cool that she actually named him.

TH: Oh, yeah.

RK: Okay, now I’ll shut up.

TH: Oh no, no, we can come back to this.

RK: You know, so, that's why I have all these animals. And Lucky just kind of came in here, and she's pretty easy. She goes out during the day. I just got them in because it's so hot now, but I don't let him out. She's got claws,

and she's got teeth, and she can go up, she can shimmy up a tree. But him, we have hawks, eagles, owls, osprey, we have coyotes, we have a bobcat around here, now, who I heard kill a rabbit about three weeks ago. It broke—I didn't know what it was. I'd never heard anything like it. And my neighbor back here, he said, he came over one day and brought me tomatoes. He said, "You never got a bobcat around here, now?" I said, "No." I told him what happened and he said, "Ruth, it's probably a bobcat. He's probably killing a rabbit because they—it's screaming." It was awful. It was, I never heard anything—because it was like a cat, but a growl. It was like, [impersonating bobcat] "Roarr!" You know? And I was going, "What in the—?" And then I just heard this, "Eeek, eek, eek, eek, eek." I was sitting there, I was in my new swing out there, I just started crying. I mean, I just, it upset me for about an hour. And it still does. I mean, I know it's all nature and everything but. And I and then I looked at them, I said, "Guys, this is why I yell at you for being out. You can't go out after dark." And if Shrimpii and I come in, he knows. I mean, you know, he knows we leave that car door, and he comes straight up these steps. Because, I mean, I have them here, I have all of it. And he's, he doesn't have a clue. He doesn't have a clue what a car could do to him. He'd just go, "Oh, hey eagle, ooh." You know? But, anyway, I love nature, and I have these animals. They needed a home, and I gave them a home. And they've been good for me too, especially during the pandemic, living by myself. And they make me laugh, and anything that can make you laugh, but I yell at him too, like him barking all the time. He barks when you come the door, and he barks when you leave the door. And he goes in circles, like he's going to tear you up, but if you say, "Boo!", he's done. All right, interview me.

TH: All right. Well, why don't—so, how long would you like for us to be here? I don't want to take up too much of your time. We can play it by ear, or we can cut it off at an hour, two hours.

RK: We can play it by ear.

TH: All right!

RK: You know, I have no plans after this. That was the one thing I had to get to, the paper, and I've had it done since lunchtime. I forgot to send it, I was in the shower and I thought, "Maybe send that before you forget it." So.

TH: Okay!

RK: Yeah, okay!

TH: Okay, perfect, yeah, all right. Well, I usually just start out. And so, we'll just say, this is Tara Hinton and Lily Johnson, interviewing Ruth King for the Changes Down East project, with the Core Sound Museum. And we are in Miss King's home in Sea Level, and it is July 16, 2024, and thank you for letting us interview you! I think first, maybe, will you just introduce yourself, and say a little bit about who you are, kind of like we already did, but on the record?

RK: All right, okay, well, I'm Ruth King, and I have lived Down East now 22 years, but I moved to Carteret County in 1985. And, I moved to Carteret County in '85 with a company called Waste Industries. So, I helped people put

trash in landfills, and now, 40-some years later, I work with an environmental company that, we prevent organic waste going into landfills, and we manufacture compost—the company is McGill Environmental Systems. So, I'm 72 and I still work. I enjoy my work, and it's, I think it's kind of cool. We're helping the planet. And I believe, when we talk about the environment, this is part of it. So, I was very involved in Carteret County when I came down here, because of my job and networking. Everybody had garbage, so I pretty much met the county from one end to the other. I was the sales rep for them, you know, selling service to them, to pick up their garbage. And so, I was involved in the Chamber. I was involved in a lot of the community organizations here. In 1990, I was given the Citizen of the Year Award for Carteret County—that's through the Chamber. I was co-chairman in 1990 over the North Carolina Seafood Festival.

So, I've been involved in this county, and a lot of people know me, that have been here for a long time, because of my involvement in the community work. I was involved with the beach cleanup, Beach Clean, I think, well I don't even remember what it is now, I don't know if they still do it or not. But so, you know, I was involved in that for some years. Then, in 1990 I opened up a restaurant in Morehead City. And from 1990 to 2002, 12 years, and through that restaurant, of course—I had a restaurant, but I catered in the community, it was very good to me. So again, I met more of the community through the restaurant, and also catering. And then 1997, I think, let's see. So, in 1997 at the time, we had Time Warner here, which was the local cable, and they did a local cable show, you know, the different groups, organizations. And I went to them, and they gave me the okay to have a cooking show on the local cable. And it was called, "What's Cooking with Ruthie," and I cooked in the restaurant, but I also, in the beginning, probably the first two years, they, a cameraman came from the station, would go with me on location.

Eventually, I bought my own camera, and just filmed my own shows, and I went into people's homes. I loved going into the older people in this county. I filmed the Davis Crab House, when the women were still picking crabs. I did a show in Salter Path, at one of the scallops houses, when they were still opening scallops. David Yeomans, which I'm sure you've heard of his work, was a county commissioner, David Yeomans from Harkers Island. And David was very good to me, and was on some of my shows. Sonny Williamson was on some of my shows. So, I was, I really wanted to film the older generation in cooking, and so I had an opportunity on that show. So again, a lot of people knew me because of the show. It would come on once a week. I filmed once a month, but they would show that once a week, they'd show the same thing. And I did that for six years, six/seven years, and unfortunately, all those tapes are in that building out back, and I don't have a clue what shape they're in. Every year, every first of the year, I say I'm gonna get them out and try to get them on, you know, DVD or something. So again, being involved in community by the cooking show.

But, I'd go out on the Outer Banks, see people cooking or whatever, you know, it was some it was kind of hooty. Yeah, some of it was kind of hooty. There was one time, we had a boat in, off Beaufort waterfront, it was one of those high, like, speed boats, but it, you know, had—you would take tourists out, and they went really fast out there. So, I had this character that would be on the show sometimes, her name was—my mother's name, my grandmother, my mother's named Eula. My mother's name was Ruth Bell. So, my character was Eula Belle Lane. My mother was Bell Lane, or Ruth Lane. So, she was this character with big blonde wig and, you know, lots of makeup, and all. So anyway, I did a show on that boat. And so, I brought food, of course, you know. And I started out, anytime she was on the show, I'd go, like, you know, "My cousin Ruthie's, you know, gone." And, you know,

and I had that Southern drawl, and “I'm from Kinston, North Carolina,” and all this stuff. But anyway, so we were on the boat, and so, he was going really fast. So I'm trying to, like, have a cocktail, you know, a martini glass, and trying to eat a chicken wing, it's all flying everywhere, and so. And then, I did some shows in the restaurant. I did a Valentine's show one time, and the only thing you saw was a man's hand at the dinner. And I'm talking about, you know, I prepared this dinner, and all this stuff on the show. But the last thing I showed was him, and I had one of those ugly bags. It's a brown paper bag, but with a face on it, and if somebody was ugly, you put that thing on it so you didn’t have to see their face. So, you know, it was pretty, hooty, you know. But, and then, but I went into people’s homes, and churches, and went to other restaurants. So, people know me from that.

So I've been around here, and I've seen the changes, good and bad, for Carteret County. Between the restaurant, and where I'm at today, I did a lot of different things. I've always worked. I grew up on a tobacco farm, and you work. So after the restaurant, not sure what I was going to do, or go. I taught the GED for the college. I substitute taught, I taught driver's education to 14 and a half year olds, 15. And not being a mother, that was, you know, of course, they wanted to shock me. And I finally, one time, I just started telling them, I said, “Don't try to BS a BSer that was BSing before you were even born.” And I’d kind of look at you, sort of that Minnie Pearl look like, “What?” And some would get it. But I always said I didn't know whether God gave me a blessing in that, or I pissed him off. And really, but, it was a blessing for all of us, because by not having children, and not realizing the horrible homes that some of these young people come from, I'll never forget it. I had a 15-year-old boy about this big around, and during the summertime, I'd have them four hours at a time, and we had to eat lunch every day, and the boy with us, there was always two of them, and he chose Kentucky Fried Chicken for two days. And I knew this boy didn't have money, and he lived in a home, with a bunch of children. But he brought a breakfast bar every day, and I said, “Look, get you something to eat. Get you some chicken.” For two days, he got a drink and a little bowl of mashed potatoes with gravy, and that child, that young boy, licked that paper of that breakfast bar. So, it was a learning lesson for me, too, to see.

And, yeah, some of the stories, they weren't shocking, some of the stories, unfortunately, are very true. And they, I mean, it's just, it's horrible. But anyway, so that was a life lesson, you know, doing that. And then, so then I worked with a local company, and then I got this job here. You know, this is what I was shooting for anyway. And like I said, been here Down East, now 22 years as of this Christmas, and, or past Christmas. And, but what I've seen in Carteret County, of course, when I came here in ‘85 I saw a tremendous amount of building on the beach—Atlantic Beach area, Salter Path, Emerald Isle. Because one of the things we had were the Dumpsters where construction companies would use so, I saw all of it going on. I saw places that were filled in. I've, what I've seen in Carteret County since ‘85, are people, local, come here, develop, they do what they want to do, then they get [slaps her wrist], and pay the fine. And there's an old saying, it's better to be forgiven, than to ask for permission. And I see that going on today Down East, all the time. But back in the ‘80s, especially before ’85, to I want to say, ‘95, all those condos, the big hotels, all that stuff, was being built. And going to Fort Macon, that was marshes that houses are sitting on today…. I think one of the things that bothers me the most with what's going on in our country—the world—but let's just say, stick here local in this country is the greed. I never thought I would see greed overcome anything like it is, and greed means they don't care about the environment. They don't care about—these people have money, they've got children, they've got grandchildren, and hopefully they'll have, that generations will keep going. But what are they going to do? I mean, I've taken down trees, but I plant trees, you know? And so, but anyway, so, I saw a lot of that going on in the, you know, when I lived up in

Carteret, I mean, in Morehead and things. And then moving down here, ‘22, I lived in a friend's place in Atlantic, till I bought this property, about 2007.

One of my biggest pet peeves, is probably around 2003—and it still is going on today…. But I wrote a letter, because what I was seeing are the grass cutting, and they're still doing it today. They cut down, so you got a road, you got the roadside, well you got really, road, road bed, roadside, and these canals, they're the natural canals, because they were water, and they built a road on it. These grass cutters come in, and they cut all the way to the—let's just say this is the edge, you know, road, roadside, this is water. So they come in and they cut down here. So what they're doing is, they're cutting away the grassroots or anything to help hold that road bed when there's storms coming in here. And they still do it. And I wrote a letter, and I said, “I'm not a scientist, I'm not an engineer, but you're tearing up what is going to be your road bed and road, plus that grass helps filter out any oil, or gas, or whatever's dripping out of a car.” It drips out, and it does! For our, and they do it today, I have gone back and back, and I ran across that man, I had to go to a Driver's Ed conference or something in Wilmington, and he was the speaker. And I went up to him, said, my name is Ruthie King, I wrote you a letter. And that man went like this to me, [scoffs], and walked away. I'll never forget that, no. So, I won't tell you what party, the ones that aren't nice, but anyhow. I’ll just never forget this and I’ve bitched about it all along. Leave the, and now when you leave Davis, or before you get to Davis, on the left hand side, where you get to the bridge there, if you look, they had to put rock in there, because that roadside, your roadside’s disappearing. Davis, come around the crab house, here, you come back, same thing, right there. Cedar Island, when there's high tides and stuff, it's eating away, even if, you know, the tide comes up on the road, it will still help protect the roadside road bed. [They] cut it, cut it, cut it, you know.

But the state will not cut what we call the needle grass that's growing in our ditches here, which could help slow the water when there is a storm. “Yeah, oh, you can't cut the needle grass!” But they'll cut needle grass down, on the road, to the roadside. Anyway, I'm a woman, it doesn't matter. Let me tell you something. 2024 is still a man's world. Don't fool yourself. You can get ahead, you can do—it's just like old Minnie Pearl said in her quote there. But, I mean, I, when I got out of school, I did, I wanted to do something different. I tried to get on with the road crew, I mean, I tried to get on the railroad in Atlanta. I went, I went two years of community college in Kinston, and then went Georgia State University, early ‘70s. And so, they said I was too short, and all that crap. So, I went to work with a road crew in Atlanta, Georgia. I was the first woman they'd ever hired. My first job was hauling the, you know, the stop sign, go, stop. And then I got on equipment, started running equipment, and I was on, I tried some years ago, not, with the internet, now, it's probably gone, but I was on a show, on their public TV called women—Help Wanted, Women Only. And I've got my hard hat going down Buford Highway on a roller. Came back to North Carolina, went to work at Texas Gulf, which is the phosphate mining company, which is North Carolina Phosphate now. Again, first woman to do that. So, I ran heavy equipment in the mine department.

Again, I grew up on a farm, I grew up with woods. I called them on an osprey nest one time that they were going to destroy. They didn't like me much. And, you know, it, the greed, they needed to, whatever. But, I used to collect shark's teeth down there, as big as my hand, and stuff. First time I went to Ocracoke was in 1975, when I started working. And I worked shift work, so 8-4, 4-12, 12-8, and when I would get off, like, you know, in the mornings, I'd go hunt teeth. I went to Ocracoke the first time, and I stayed in a pup tent, you know, just

whatever. Started taking those teeth over there, and there was a shell shop over there, and I started selling my teeth. So I stayed in the motel, my ferry ride was, I think it was $5 round trip back then, and they had food to eat. Funny, I was having three meals a day, stuff. So that's when I first started going to Ocracoke, by selling those sharks teeth out there. So, I've seen changes here, I've seen changes out there, because I came Down East, to the ferry, all those years. I worked with American Tobacco Company and traveled on the road with them from '80, probably '79-'80 to '83 or so. Worked in Kinston on the market, went to Kentucky, and one time, went to Maryland.

So, I grew up a farm, again, working with farmers, I was on the market, and so—I work with farmers today, too, big time. But so, from there, that's when I went with Waste Industries after that, and then had the restaurant, and then down here. So, I have a very, background as far as working goes, but nature has been important to me no matter where I've lived, because I grew up—that night that happened with that animal, the moon was, there was kind of a hole in the leaves out there, and that moon was going down, and I was sitting in my new swing, and I was thinking, this reminds me of me and my daddy. Because, by the fifth grade, I was the only child, and—because my siblings were gone, you know, married, whatever. I'm the only one that went to college. But I worked with my mother in the kitchen, she was a great country cook. She was great cook, so I wanted to cook with her, but I spent time with my daddy, in the woods and in the fields. But at night time, somehow we'd sit out back, and there was no light, you know, back then, and we would listen to the, because the woods were back and so we'd hear birds and animals, and look at stars. So, when that moon was setting, it reminded me of me and my daddy, and I was having this great memory, heart full, and then I heard that, [impersonating bobcat] "Roarr!" You know, it was horrible, but, so nature is very important for me.

I take a lot of pictures of nature, the sunsets down here are fabulous, fabulous, fabulous. And birds—I've got 15 feeders here, you know. And if I take something away from nature, and I have out here, I try to put back. You know, I try to plant trees. This little area that I just got cleared out—one of my customers is Carolina Homes and Gardens, up on 24, and I said, "You know, I want, what I want to do, you know, I've kind of got this little area like this." And I said, "I'm thinking about holly." He said, "Ruthie, no." He said, "Just use your Wax Myrtle." He says, "Stays green year round." He said, "That's what I do, and you can train it." So, I thought, that's such a good idea, cause I am covered in Wax Myrtle. And I want, that's why, when I came here—I got flooded in 2011, and lost everything. So, when I came here, it was an old shack house, it was good enough for me. And it faced that way. It was grass to here, to the road. And once I got in this property, even with the old house, I thought, "Hmmm." So I started letting it grow natural out there. And then some local men brought a tractor and a bush hog, and his four cronies come—and they're all good men, but they pretty much drink liquor—came up to my house—there was a tree out there that we had to cut down for this house to be put in—with a whole gallon of liquor, and they sat under the tree while their buddy was cutting. I had him cut back over here, back on the stitch bank, and I had him make me a path out there, sort of like a little path through there, which I've got statues of women and benches through there. So anyway—and then I've let it grow up, and it had grown up all the way from the road too, but Florence came in, really, tore a lot of stuff down. It's grown back up, but what's happened since Florence, these Merkle bushes and Yaupon trees were all the way to the road—now I've got marshes coming in. Marshes were on that side of my driveway, but when you leave, you look over to the left, it's marshes now.

So these things are changing, even on my property. And I'm sure you've talked to people about, you know, the ghost forest around here, especially because, and the first time I saw that happening was in 2003. Not here—at the time, I was with Waste Industries. I worked on the bases, I was going from 172 to cut throughout 17. That's the first place on—it was called Courthouse Base, on that Snead's Ferry side of the base, on 172—was the first time I started seeing these trees die. And then, you know, I was told, then, you know. And at that time, it really was, because we gone through those hurricanes, you know, '80s and stuff that—or the '90s, rather, I should say in the '90s. Well, no, it was the '80s and early '90s, because I had the restaurant by '90. But, you know, it weakened the tree, the beetles get in there and kill it. And, course, now, you have that happening with the storms, but you got the salinity coming up, as you know. Lake Mattamuskeet, I go up there every winter for the birds. I go up there, and I've seen that happen through years. When I first started seeing those die between the Crab House, after you go through Davis, and we always said the Crab House, and then come into Stacy. The first time I saw was that first batch, as you come by the Crab House, I went, "Oh, my God," you know. And then, so 2002, I came down here. I mean, on a day to day basis, I'm, you know, driving or whatever. And so, yeah, they're dying. But then, when they went back out of that marsh area back there, I was going "My God," you know.

So I've lived through the hurricanes. I mean, in '85 when I lived in Morehead City, on Evans Street, God, I had just moved there, and I can't tell you what storm that was. I was okay in Morehead, but a lot of the boats and stuff went up Calico Creek and all those places, and just were destroyed. And then I opened the restaurant in 1990, and in '95-'96, Bertha and Fran hit back to back. So from '95 to 2002 really, in my business, I was hit every single year, and you don't get that money back. And it's, you know, August, September, and that's when you need, that's when you make your money, I was a small business. And in '93, this was in March '93, a nor'easter came through here. Morehead City used to have these, the Arendell Street, I want to say, from the beach stoplight to almost downtown, there were huge cedar trees all the way down on that street. In '93, it was March, because I catered a wedding in Havelock at the Catholic Church, it was blowing, 100 or something, it snapped those cedar trees left and right on Arendell Street. And it was it, the power, everything went out. I had rented a U-Haul truck, because it was a big deal, big wedding, it was diesel. This girl got married, her father was a general, something on the base. So, he was—the power went off at the, they had there at the Catholic Church in their hall—he was able to go to the base and get generators, and, you know, the band would be playing, the power would go off, and they had to get more gas. And that night, and what happened in that storm, it was a nor'easter, and it was hot, it was stormy, blowing thunder, lightning, wind. And then that night, it got cold. And, I mean, that temperature dropped to the point, when I got ready to go that night, I couldn't get it started—that truck—because it was diesel. I mean, it was bitterly cold. The next morning, I had to hire a tow truck to go get it.—Lucky, Lucky. No no, down, down. Lucky, I'm gonna get spray bottle!

TH: That's a real threat!

RK: Down, down. She's pretty good about it, I mean, she better not be on my table in my kitchen. I don't want her—there's too much stuff for her to get hold of. But you know, that right there, those storms, you know, I am just flabbergasted that people don't leave, that there's not changes. I grew up—was born in 1951. We had snow in Kinston, we had cold, we had ice. I worked in a tobacco barn, and it would be, it might get up in the late 80s, high 80s, but it wasn't 100 degrees back then, and we were about to die then. We didn't have air conditioning, I think, till I was a senior in high school, a window unit, we just didn't have it, you know, didn't need it. Had a good

breeze at night, screens. So I, and living down here…. And I find this is my line, and I've been, I've been writing for the Carteret News-Times since I came down here. I wrote about the, back in the ‘80s, I went on the beach, the sand fences? All those big houses were being built, and they were, nobody would put up sand fences. Well, guess what? The beach disappeared. And I remember writing an article about how, you know, growing up and coming down here, everybody had sand fences. You had a beach, but your property was protected. I think some of them are coming back to that.

So, I've been writing about changes down here since I came here, but my spiel has been this for a long time: “How can the amount of people that we have on this planet, the amount of industries we have on this planet, the amount of automobiles we have on this planet, planes, transportation, how—and garbage, trash—how can these things not affect this planet? How can it not?” And there's one woman who, won't speak of her party either—they're all up their asses—but anyway, I am not a Trumper. If you are, I'm sorry, but I'm not. I never will be. And I was a registered Republican my whole life, until Bush. And because of all that mess that went on there, and I'm an affiliated voter, I don't really like either party, but I’ll be damned if I'll vote for Donald Trump. And you don't remember this because, you know, and I don't understand why people my age don't, in the—and look this up—in the late ‘80s and ‘90s, he screwed New Jersey left and right, and New York, on the boardwalk and stuff, and he filed bankruptcy many times, and all these small businesses say, “He's the greatest!” He screwed them all. He screwed them all. When he filed bankrupt, they didn't get paid, they didn’t get their money. And what he's done to women through the years, not now, through the years.

So, I don't get it. I, you know, I do Facebook, but and I like this lady, but she's a Trumper, and she had a picture last night with Trump, and Jesus up behind with Jesus’ hand on there, that says, “God protected his ordained.” Ordained? He doesn't go to church. He doesn't do anything for charity. He doesn't do anything for anybody, other than him and his cronies. I don’t get, I don’t get it. I'll die. I'll die. I was in here cooking this weekend, and I was right here at the microwave, and I try not to listen to that crap, it just drives me nuts. And I just stopped what I was doing, and I said, “God, please, please, don't. Don't let this happen again. Please.” I don't understand. I don't understand. I really don't understand, but my first thought, I don't want anybody to die. I don't want Trump. Stephen Colbert was such a great, I love Stephen Colbert. And he, those guys, there's three guys at night. They just give him a new asshole, I love it. Every night. But even Stephen Colbert, last night, started his show with going, I am very sorry this happened. I don't want anybody to be killed over politics or whatever. He was eloquent with what he said, but then during the other part, he was pretty funny. But, I mean, it's true, but I have a problem with everybody just so upset about him. Why didn't this woman say, “God, why do you, why didn't you ordain all these children that are killed?” We won't go there, but you know, it just anyway.
This lady down here is Republican, and she's always talking about, and I started—and she's in real estate—and I and I started saying that spiel about, “How can it not be? How can not this happened with there? And I swear to God, about a year ago, she was talking to somebody and used that same analogy. I’m thinking, “Mm, maybe you're getting it.” Yeah, you’re selling real estate, you just want to make money, but it bothers me. At 72, I'm not one of these people who go, “Oh, I wish I was 20 again.” Bullshit. Been there, done it. Don't have no desire. And I feel for your generation, with the planet, with what's going to happen here. I feel for your children, and you gotta hope and pray, maybe they'll wake up. I don't know. I was watching *Nova*, four o'clock this morning, and what they're doing is they're researching, they're going to send rockets, but with the asteroids, I guess? The, you know, that are out here wherever, and the one that, you know, hit Russia, you know, a couple years ago,

you don't know what I'm talking about? See, I didn't even know it hit it. I mean, I just remember seeing the fireball, but they were showing it was an aftershock of the thing just passing over. It didn't, it landed, but it didn't, it was in an area where nobody lived, but, I mean, these towns and everything underneath it. Hell, the windows blew, and they were, I mean, people were being blown away at the aftershock! Just like a nuclear bomb would have done, but thank God, it didn't have the chemicals in it. I went like, damn! You know, so, not only are we destroying—and it's just not America, it's everywhere.

There's shit in the ocean. I went out, when I first came down here, I went out with this man and his grandchildren. And those grandchildren would toss all of those cans, and I went like, and I said—and you don't want to bitch too much, because they'll throw your ass out there in the water when you don't know how to swim—and so, and I went like, I said, "You know, I'll be glad to take your cans back to my house." This is what the guy said, "Ahh, they're going to rust anyway, and the crabs can live in them." You got people down here that don't want tourists now, we got tourists now. But when I came down in the '80s, not like now. I've seen oil cans go over on a fishing boat, I've seen all this. Now, they're better. They're better now, but I've seen that shit, garbage out down the highway. They wasn't tourists going through here, when I first came here, you know? Ignorance? Not wanting to know the truth? There was something I read today about, I don't know, people who don't want to hear, don't want to know, don't want to hear, although then they hear it, but they don't want to believe it, or whatever. But, as far as down here, it's all around us, with trees dying, and the salt coming up. As I said, right here on my property, the marshes have moved in, and one of the things with keeping everything as natural as I can, it has made, it protects me when those tides come in.

Now Irene, yeah, Irene is when it got me in 2011. And like I said, I had a little house here. And when I came—it came during the night—when I was able to get down the road, it was about 10:30-11 o'clock in the morning. Had to park out there, and the water just—because that driveway kind of comes down, like this—was up to my, you know, top of my thighs here. And the water at that time came in my house about, about this high. So it got the furniture, got everything, you know. It took me two years to fight the insurance company, and they screwed me out of 20 grand, sure did. It was a fight with insurance companies, with FEMA, with everybody. And I ran into FEMA with the restaurant, because those herds I had there, I mean literally—and even with the house, still—for two years, I'd be so frustrated by five, six o'clock in the afternoon, I would just sit down and cry, because I didn't do this to me. But I've been paying you insurance money, or I pay my taxes, and you're questioning me? And when FEMA came in, in that old house—and of course, we had moved stuff out—this guy drove up in my yard in a white Mercedes sports, like an SUV. Now, this is 2012 probably? End of 2011? His wife is sitting in the air condition, with her little poodle dog about this high. And I looked, and that son of a bitch had on a watch, I can't remember the name of it now, it was foreign. And I said, "Got a nice watch there, bud." And he said, "Yeah." And I looked it up, and that watch was like, $6,000 or something. And he turned me down. He said, "She can repair it." And let me tell you, when I found that out, I raised hell, and—I'm a letter writer, and this is my belief, and I write letters today. I write letters to presidents of the United States. I even wrote one to Putin at one time that came back. I write congressman, senators, CEOs. You can go on the internet today, and you can find any CEO of any corporation in the world. It's public. They've got to. You can get their names, you can get what they make, you can get their address. And by damn, you screw me, I'm after you. I'm not some crazy woman, "Oh, you know." I have facts. And how dare you do this to me? And I tell you what, when that guy did that, and I read all those things, things changed in my life, in this flooded house. And I think I wrote to head of FEMA, the local

Senator, Congressman, whoever, and I got attention, and things moved a little faster. I went after Fidelity Insurance—that dude was making $4 million a year—and screw him out of $20,000. I never got it.

And so I have fought my whole life to be where I'm at today, and I'm still fighting. I mean, I just wrote—I'm diabetic, and I've been, I came out of my mama big, and I've been diabetic 30 years like I said, I've taken pills, taken pills, whatever. And I'm always fighting, because I love a cake or dessert, I mean, you know, whatever. But I, and I do not like to exercise, so. But my, a new doctor that I have now, in town. I went to my same doctor for 42 years. He was my gynecologist—I went to him when I was 22 or 24 years old, and he was in Kinston, and then he closed his practice and worked with a group out of Greene County, but he came to Pamlico County once a week. So I've been going to him all these years, until just last year. And needed, I needed to get a local doctor. He put me on the Ozempic. And guess what? My sugar's been going down, and I've lost some weight. But that's not why I'm taking it. My sugar's going down, and I'm getting off pills, you know, whatever. Well, he gave me samples in the beginning, and then January 1, Medicare paid for Ozempic this year. Great. By March, I was in what they call the donut hole, so I was going to have to pay for these shots once a week, but a month, and it was going to, it's going to cost me like $300-$400 a month, plus I take another pill that's about the same amount. So I went after Nova. Who owns, who does it? And I was getting over it. I started an application last fall, last October, I've sent them four applications with everything that you're supposed to have with it. The fourth one, I wrote a letter to the CEO of that company, and about three weeks ago, I get two letters a day for about three days going, "You've been denied because you didn't have this, and doctor didn't sign this, da da." So I finally called one—and you can't ever talk to anybody—but I finally got hold, it was late one afternoon, and I got hold of a man, and I was in tears. I was, I said, "I need help!" Now, I don't know who he was, but, and at that time, and I said, I wrote a letter to the CEO, mega-launcher short. The next day, I get a call and they go, "You've been approved." So they're sending me four months to my doctor's office for me to pick up there. I don't care where it goes. Plus, she says, "You need to go ahead and fill out a new application, you got to redo it in October, so it'll be ready for you in January." But I had to fight for it. And part of what I said is, "I'm not doing this to lose weight. I am doing this for my sugar, because it's working for me." I said, "I'm not a movie star. I'm not somebody with a lot of money that I want to lose weight with, you know?" So I believe in—who's going to fight for me? My parents are gone, you know, my siblings are gone. Who's going to fight for Ruthie King?

But we shouldn't have to freaking fight in our country. And I don't know if y'all know about this Project 2025—that's some scary shit, and I'm telling you, it's going to screw me over with Medicare, and Social Security…. Everything you see on this property, I have worked my ass off for. There ain't been no man to give me no money, no! And if they did, I'd have to—and I'm not gay. I'm not anything. I'm just—I pay my bills. I work hard. I grew up working hard. My mom and daddy worked hard. Why wouldn't I work hard, you know? So that all being said, or whatever, it's, you know when you talk about the environment and what's going on down here, we have hurricanes, and if we don't have trees to protect our properties, trees blow down, yes, but those trees do help your property. You know, we've got wonderful nature down here. We are blessed down here. We're really, and, you know, and my argument too—I write articles for, well, I worked for a fishing magazine when I first came in, it was called Sport Fishing Report, and it's defunct now, but I sold ads for him, but I wrote stories. And what's his name? Eddie White, Eddie Smith? He owns Grady-White Boats. And when I first came down here, I got involved with the commercial fishermen. Okay? I've been on the southern, I was on the board with North Carolina Marine Fisheries.

TH: Advisory board? I saw that!

RK: Yeah, and they ticked me off.

TH: Why?

RK: Because I decided to talk about commercial fishing. But I—and I've done several articles y'all—and I've never quite understood by Pam, I mean, especially Pam, because—it doesn't matter. But I get, from the North Carolina Wildlife Commission, I get a report about every two years of the amount of commercial vessels licensed, from the Virginia line to South Carolina line. When I, the first time I did that, I think, was about 2003 or 4, at that time there were 44,000, and I've got this on the computer. Whenever I want to pull it up, I think it was like 44,000 commercial vessels, okay? Commercial fishing. To 275,000 recreation vessels. I've got a report from her just recently, and I'm thinking the last story I wrote was probably what, 2016? Maybe 2, 12, 13. Maybe 14, because during that time when I was flooded, and it was down to like 4,400 commercial? You're talking about 40, maybe 40,000 to—or maybe it was 20,000 I can't remember now, but it was a lot, to 200. The next time I read it, it was around 4600, commercial, to almost 300,000. Now there's less than 3,000—this report I got—commercial vessels versus recreation ones. And I wrote for this fishing magazine, and the reason why I was even talking to Eddie Smith, he called me one day. He said, "Ruthie, I think you're spending too much time with the commercial fisherman down there." Because I had met him through organizations and counties and stuff—I've been involved during the Big Rock during the years for whatever reasons. And so I compared the—which recently somebody from Cedar Island who's a commercial fisherman, a woman, I hadn't thought of it, but she made a very good point—I compared the farmers to the commercial fishermen, because I work with farmers, and so a little farmer today, and I'll tell you in a minute about farming. I say that we've got like, three or four different levels of farming, but because of the laws, the regulations, and things that are happening in the farming industry and whatever, a little farmer, a small, you know these young boys that want to grow up and be a commercial fisherman in a little motorboat—it ain't happening. You know, all the fish they're not letting you catch, and stuff. And she made the comment to me. She said, "Ruthie, there's a difference. The difference is this—the government subsidized the farmers. They don't subsidize us." And I had never thought about that, because I know farmers get subsidized.

I work with—my territory is I-95 East, North and South Carolina. So I work with the farmers in the North Carolina, the largest farming communities in North Carolina—Duplin County, Sampson County, Lenoir County, you know, Onslow County, Johnston County, and I have a farmer, I have some big farmers. They've got thousands and thousands of acres. I had a farmer last year who's got 1,700 tractor-trailer trucks of our compost. They've learned to improve their soil instead of putting fertilizer out there for one year, which drains in our waters, etc. Okay? And let me tell you something about Open Ground Farms. No, don't, don't do that, because crazy enough, crazy enough that land just down the road from here has a tremendous amount of peat. It is peat. Because when I first came down here and was working with McGill, I went and talked to them. Their soil samples are good. That one area—but you gotta understand—that was a wooded area, it's old, and so they have natural peat. They do use some chemicals. All farmers have to use some nitrogen, like corn farmers, because—but the farmers are learning to improve their soil. The thing about compost is, you're improving your soil. You're

helping drainage. Do you see how great my grass is? It's compost, honey. It ain't got anywhere you see like a spot, but no rain. I don't water that out there. Compost maintains, helps maintain water. It drains, it loosens up your soil so it can breathe your roots. You know, I could talk all day, that's a whole nother subject I can get on. But there's ways to improve. I mean, with lawns, instead of putting chemicals on the lawns, put compost down. That's why I have what I—I don't use any chemicals. My sister bitches because she's got weeds in her grass. Well, they, you know, I get tractor-trailer loads dumped at her house—her husband died, so she can't do it now—but I told him, I said, "Phil, that yard's full. It's right there." Well, they went out and sprayed a little bit. They really needed to, kind of till it in and get, you know, maybe an inch out there. So I don't—there's probably five inches out here in mine. It was hot, dump it, you know, rake it in and dump it. But compost—what I do is helping our environment.

Golf courses are now using compost, but part of my job is educating people on compost, because especially in this area, or the coast of North Carolina, using compost versus chemicals that are going to run off into our ditches, into the canals, into the sound, into the ocean. Everybody talks about farming, and even those farmers I'm talking up there, you know those chemicals will get. And the thing about, if you look at—because I go to farm shows and stuff—but if you look at a sprayer, you know, the sprayer comes down, and if the wind's blowing—but it didn't really go out when it's windy—but it's broadcasting, so it's, it is just going on the plant one time. Next year, they have to come back and do the same. But now, if you use compost, you're improving the—you're putting organic matter in your soil. And so, talking there, now I do, Carolina Home & Gardens sells my compost, so we do have a lot of landscapers over the Emerald Isle way that use it, top dressing mums instead of chemicals, and they're learning. Robin down here in Edgewater, she sells by the bag, she's my only bag customer I have, because she didn't have a place for it, and everybody calls it Ruthie's Dirt. This morning, I saw James Fulcher, I took some to his mother. James Fulcher's daughter is the one that James, Sarah James Redfish Tournament is for. So he said, "You seen Buddy Goodwin last week or two?" I said, "No." "You talked to Buddy?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, let me tell you, he needs to do advertising for you." He said, "Man, he loves that compost. It's all he talks about, that damn compost you sell." And I said, "Wait, I have seen him about a month ago over there to get together." And he said, "Ruthie, Ruthie!" And—because it works, and it's, and see, we take all these. The reason it works because of all the intake material, we take sludges, we take solid waste. By the time we get solid waste—everybody goes, "Oh you got shit in your compost,"—it's already been treated at the waste treatment. So the time we get that solid, when the water squeezed out of that solid goes back into our rivers, if it weren't clean, it wouldn't be going in our rivers. It's infrared, I mean it's, all that stuff goes through it. So yes, we have solids, biosolids. But we have, and when I say food waste, like your grocery stores, Walmart, Food Lion, some of those, some years ago, wanted to be more sustainable, so they bought vacuum trucks. So it's just, you know, the green waste. It's, you know, the vegetables and stuff, no meats or whatever. So we take that, we take sludges from food processing companies, we take in gypsum, we take in wood and paper, and before we put anything in our compost, it is tested before we ever mix them in the mix. So when I have, you know—our compost is tested with a US Composting Council Lab. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture tests our ag product. So the reason it's good for farmers, is because it has your NPK, it has a macro, micronutrients, it has element of lime, they don't have to buy lime. So it's all these things, and it's building—and if a farmer uses it 3, 4, or 5 years, they do their test every year, and eventually they don't have to use anything. You know, depends on what they grow and they rotate. I mean, farmers are getting smart about being—when I first started working with farmers, it was, I don't know when in the world it was, I can't remember. But then it

became sustainable, and then it became something else, and now the word regenerative. Regenerative is a word now, but it's just improved. You need improve the soil. And, you know, down here, like I say, but everybody bitches about Open Ground, right? But back to our waters here, I tell everybody, “Even if we're not perfect, I'd much rather have an oyster, clam or shrimp out of Core Sound than Bogue Sound.” You know, we're blessed right now and Open Ground Farms, you know, they're pretty conscious out there. I knew the head of it at one time. He's not there anymore. But you know, when I first started with McGill, and that's kind of how we became friends. Well, that's not true, he—that farm is owned by Italians.

TH: Yeah.

RK: And so, they come over about twice a year, whatever, for board meetings. And this guy would bring them to my restaurant, and I would serve them like dinner food for lunch. So I got to know them, and—I can make a call now, and you know, they'll let me drive through from one side to the other just to look at nature and stuff out there. Bet you don't know about—do you know what a fallow deer is?

TH: No, tell us!

RK: A fallow deer is like a white deer with brown spots, and their on what they call Lukens island out here. So like from here, if you go, you know where the Open Ground Farm gate is, when you come off, you know, out of Sea Level here?

LJ: Mhmm.

RK: If you go through that gate, and you go, I don't know, however many miles down there. You'll take a road to the right that goes out to what they call Lukens Island. And I've catered out there, I had the opportunity to cater out there even after I closed, since I've been down here. So there was, they have some trophies on the wall, and then I got—and now I have a key to the gate. I don't go out there, but, you know. I've seen one. They're real pretty. Instead of tan with white, they're white with tan. They're called fallow—F, A, L, L, O, W, I think it is. And they came from Georgia, somebody way back there wanted some here and bought them up from Georgia.

TH: Beautiful!

RK: So, but I don't know—you know, I worry about here. My biggest fear is when you turn from the Davis corner, coming this way, that you're not going to see any land without a house on the water. And I've seen that big time in the last three, four years. Like, you know, coming into Stacy, houses along the water there. When you come into Sea Level, now there's houses, you know, all down that road on the water at Sea Level here. Houses are being built out this way towards the water, and from here to Atlantic. And of course, Cedar Island is, you know, crazy over there. So people—I saw in Ocracoke, all my friends bitching about the Northerners coming in, and building new houses, and taking the land. But who sold that land? The locals did. The same thing here. I don't know, you know, I don't have the solution, except what you can do individually. We have—I am blessed to live right here. Morehead City was nice too, and I wouldn't mind being closer back, because there's things I would do more, maybe. Probably be a little bit more involved I am and stuff, but that hour drive! Because I have to drive

for work and stuff. But I go up on the weekends, maybe listen to music, you know, everyone always has something going on. And I'll sit right here bout Saturday afternoon at 4 o'clock and say, "Oh, gee, do I really want to drive?" You know, talk myself right out of it.

I'm hoping that these newcomers coming here that are building, they're from, as you say, they're from off. I'm from off too, so don't feel bad if you say you're from off. My first experience with the word "off" was when I had the restaurant. And had some wonderful women from Salter Path that'd come and eat with me. They'd go, "Where are you from, honey?" I'd gotta go, I'd say, "Originally from Kinston." They'd go, "Oh, you're from off." And when I first came down here, I had a guy, a friend of mine, and we were walking near the graveyard there in Atlantic, by the school. With Willises, Guthries, all these things. But here was somebody, Standby, or, Si—I don't know, something like that. I said, "Well, who are those people, where are they from?" He said, "They're from off, like you are." So anyway, but I've seen the—one of the things between the cooking show, because I would come down here and have some of the older people in my cooking show, or, you know, I've had the opportunity to meet an older generation that's now dying, and they're disappearing. I've had that opportunity to see a lot of those, meet them, and hear the stories. And I don't know, you know, it's a blessing to be here. And, you know, I grew up trying to do good, and that's what I'm trying to do till I leave here. Okay!

TH: Well, it sounds like you have done a lot of good, and lived a lot of lives, too!

RK: I've got a good life, I've had a great life, you know, I've had more laughter than tears, so I'm lucky.

TH: I wanted to see if you would, if you'd be able to tell us a little bit more about some of the cultural changes that have come with all of these environmental changes, like with the Pruitt Health building, and schools, and all of these different things together—if you could say more on the cultural side?

RK: I will, but I gotta go pee.

TH: Oh, yes, of course. We'll just pause it.

RK: Well yeah, pause it. Because I am—I tell you what, I take Lasix, but I've been eating watermelon. And I fed him a little bit of watermelon today, but he's got a diaper on. He was not trained when I got him, so he pees. He drinks a lot of water, and he pees a lot. So I, he wears a diaper in this house, but he doesn't want to go out.

TH: Are we on? Are we rolling? Okay, we're rolling.

RK: So, about the people coming in here and buying or whatever?

TH: Oh, yeah, yeah. About, sort of, the cultural change that's been going on, and even, you know, like the Pruitt Health building closure, anything major in the community that you have seen?

RK: Yep, that's where we were. So, I was trying to think when I was in the bathroom, I can't, I almost feel like when I came here in 2002, I moved up. It did already. I think that was kind of still a hospital, I think. Somewhere,

maybe right before I got here, or not, it turned into Pruitt. And, of course, we had Snug Harbor. Now Snug Harbor is kind of a different story too, because the old house I bought came from Snug Harbor. Do you know why Snug Harbor was there?

TH: Retirement community? Is that right?

RK: No.

TH: No?

RK: It was for merchant seamen. And it was—merchant seamen have a union, and they have a big board, like a board over, and it was in New York. So merchant seaman, back in the day, didn't get married and have families, because they were always on ships. So they built a retirement place for the merchant seamen. And so, it was all men out there. And the guy that I bought this house from was, he was, he was originally, his family came from Norway. So anyway, he didn't like it, so he bought that little house. And there's a whole story behind him, how I met him, how I got this house, or the other house I bought. So anyway, then, I think the hospital closed around that time, but then they opened the door to being a nursing home. Because what happened through the years, merchant seamen started getting married, having families, and homes, so they didn't need a place to die, basically, is what it was. So, they opened it up to the public. That is where I taught the GED class. They allowed me to have a room in there. So I taught the local GED out there. And I'd always get there early, and so, I would sit around and talk with the men, and hear their stories about being wherever they were from, and on ships, and what kind. And then they started allowing women to come in there, as you know, retirement, rest home, whatever. And I'll never forget sitting around, there was about five or six of those older men, merchant seamen, retired, and I said, "Did y'all like it better when it was just you men, or do you like it better, now that women are here?" Nobody said a word. And finally, one guy says, "Well, I liked it better before the women got here," and another guy said, "Yeah, because they want to change everything and tell us what to do." You'll never forget it. So, and then, of course, people—the board of that union, or whoever—sold that property, they gave those people 30 days to find a place. So Pruitt, by that time, and—it wasn't Pruitt at that time, I forgot—well, it was Pruitt when that happened. When I came down, it wasn't Pruitt, it was something, I think it was like, the county house, the Carteret County, I don't know what it was called. I can't remember, but then Pruitt came, and, of course, now Pruitt's building a new building. So, I have been involved in that project going on. Something—when I got the cat, and I'm not so sure it wasn't the cat that made the noise, it was, I got her Christmas Day, and I'm thinking maybe February—because I just don't sleep, and so I'll work on the computer or something. I was in there working, it was 2, about 1:30, 2 o'clock in the morning, and I heard a bang. It sounded like something hit the front of the house here. And, well, yeah, and so I called 911, and I said, "Please don't come with sirens on." I, you know, I don't know. I mean, my house is locked up, but I would appreciate somebody—it 45 minutes. So that kind of woke my eyes up with what? So, I started a petition 20—last year, early '23, and a lot of people wouldn't sign it…. I mean, they're adults, they have good homes, and whatever. A lot of people would not sign that petition—"I don't want them down here all the time." Well, I do! And so, I started that way, before I knew this, you know, rehab places coming in here.

So, Dr. Williams, he knows me very well, and I've met the guy who's coming down here, I've been to their meetings, I try to go to the, you know, Down East meeting, whatever. And so anyway, the petition— I have, I was going to go before the board, I never have, because I've been told that there's going to be some changes coming up here in the next year or two. They're going to build a new fire, like a central fire place, and they're going to put a—we need a deputy down here. And what woke me up was the 45 minute trip. So it is a major thing. We need somebody here. We need somebody to period, anyway. So I've been kind of vocal about having local 24-hour, and I don't care if they do it at Davis, Cedar Island, but if they're in Beaufort, if—yeah, if they're in Williston, or somewhere, fine—but if they're not… So, Asa Buck, all these people, you know, know me. And so, what we've been told, through several meetings with this rehab place coming up here, is at this point in time, there is one to two deputies per day that leave this county to take a voluntary drug addict out of here, and the closest place is Jacksonville, but there's never any room there. The next place is up around Raleigh, and the next place is around Asheville. That's where they're having to take Carteret County people. So that being said, that's the reason they're doing this. The guy that's head of that, he's a good speaker. And, you know, and I, I'm very, as you can tell, I'm very upfront with my questions.

And so, we had one of the first meetings over here at this church, and, and there were some people there that were second home people in there that night. And, you know, one guy's like, "Listen, I just bought this property. How are you going to keep a drug addict from banging on my door at two o'clock in the morning, trying to break in?" "Ohh, it's going to be guarded down, yada yada." So the next meeting I went to, and this was, the first time, it was just Dr. Williams and Chris Chadwick—and you did what? You paid what? $50??—anyway, so Dr. Williams and Asa didn't show up that night, and Chris Chadwick, so I, you know, and they gave me the opportunity that night to speak about signing. So people signed that night, and I just hit the road, but I was busy with work, and so I've got a list, and I'm not I'm not through with it. I just hadn't done anything. Because they had said, "Ruthie, the only way you'll get anything done is you've got to take people with you." I said, "They're not going to go, and they're not, if they won't sign it, they sure as hell aren't going to go." The older people signed it, but people my age or 50s, 60s, you know, that's okay. I got a lot of second homers, and whatever. So, when I met the guy—and I can't tell you his name, that's going to be, own this business or whatever—same question came up. And I said, "Well, let me ask you this." I said, "Now, you got Nelson Bay right there in the back of you." I said, "How are you going to prevent a boat coming up to that shore, and sneaking some drugs, and hiding it in a bush? How are you going to stop this?" "Well, we're going to have 24-hour, yada yada, yeah yeah yeah." And I said, "But there's not going to be a deputy sheriff nearby, right?" So, I mean, I'm throwing these things out to them. So yes, I understand people wanting jobs down here. The people that want to work, work. They'll find a job. Now, your CNAs, people like that, somebody to cook there, but that generation's dead, that wants to do that. Some of CNAs for around here, they'll work there and stuff. They're supposed to bring in all these other people, you know. But, I mean, listen. Just as a homeowner, I can't find any—I am blessed that I have found this guy that knows how to do everything, and does it for $25 an hour. I love, I told him, I said, "Tell your wife another woman loves you. I don't want you, but I love you!" Because he's nice, he's clean, he does what he says he's going to do, he's here when he says he's going to be. But you have a business, and I don't know who's going to work there, you know. So they've got these little signs out, and I put this in the paper form, you know, they've already, have acquired some homes for people to stay in that want to stay. There is no jobs down here, but the people that could work, or would work, don't want to work, and that's everywhere.

That's just not here in Carteret County, that's everywhere I go with my job. Farming, and don't get me on immigration, because I'm gonna tell you what—we would weigh 10 pounds if it weren't for Hispanics and South Americans, because we wouldn't have no food. I hired Hispanics in my restaurant, and those Hispanic guys are down here now, and have been here for about as long as I have, worked with Dean Smith at the Fish House. They're great family, and they work all day long. They start at the Fish House at seven o'clock in the morning till five or six, and then they go out in this community and do everything. They help older women. I mean, people pay 'em, but I mean, again, they know how to do things. And so what's going to happen here? I don't know. I've been, I just hadn't had time, but I've been thinking about trying to call. I got his card, I think somewhere to go and check on and see what's, what the status quo is, because after this last meeting that we had back in the winter, at the Down East Council, I said, "Well, now that you're here," I said, "I think we need to have a meeting at the school, where everybody can go, you know." But I just got so busy with my job. I just, you know, maybe that's a fall thing, but I think it's time for them to give us an update. You know, when it cools off and, in the fall, school's back in, you can get in that auditorium, or one of the Baptist churches or somewhere. I, and I'm going to keep on that one, because I think we deserve to know. He talks a good game, you know. I felt ease, a little bit easier when he finished that night, but we'll see. You know it's going to be needed. It's needed. I have worked so hard to be where I'm at today by myself—and people who get into the drugs and alcohol—there's been times I wished I had something to do, or take, just to—but I didn't. I made that choice, and a lot of the "woe me, woe me" people in this world, they're "woe me"-ers because of what they do, you know?

I had a guy here working recently—I mean, you can't tell me when you come here at eight o'clock in the morning like [impersonates someone moaning and shaking]—tough on him. "Bud, what did you do this morning?" And the other day, he had his cup, he left it there and I had him go back there, and I put my finger and went [licks finger], Mountain Dew? But maybe a little liquor in there? But I don't know, I didn't drink it. I mean, I stuck my finger in there. But then, since then, it just got worse. His trailer burned down, but he was five months behind rent, and he gets up at six o'clock in the morning, and takes his dog and his wife with him, moves his son's truck away from the trailer, and is gone with the dog they never take with them, and then the trailer's on fire, but his wife was in jail for drinking. She's got a bracelet. She's not supposed to be somewhere. They caught her at Crosswoods at a poker thing. So, people like that don't want to better their lives. They don't! You're 60-some year old people! But, there's problems with drugs and yeah, the doctors are given pain medicine, stuff like that, but that's your choice. I've been given, I've had surgeries, I have been given the big, heavy duty drugs. Number one, they make me sick. But number two—now, I had surgery on my hands, carpal tunnel, back some years ago—so I didn't want them, and I do pain pretty good, so I screwed around and didn't take it as prescribed. You know, and about 12 o'clock at night, I'm like, "Oh my God!" And so by time you take it, you still, it's like, "womp, womp" [imitating hand throbbing]. So, the next hand, I did, I followed directions. But it was like, three or four days, or two days, then I'm done, because I don't want to lay up here. And I have a problem with that, I mean, and I hope y'all, I hope you see I'm very compassionate, and I will help anybody in the world. I'd give the shirt on my back, I'd give food, whatever you need. I won't give you cash, I'll go buy you food, but I ain't giving you cash to go buy liquor, drugs, and, I ain't doing it, you know? But so, we'll just have to see what's going to happen here.

But the question was, we've invested money here, what's going to happen to our real estate to be this close to a facility that you're bringing in here? That answers really never been—"You know, well, we've got other places,

and it's not bothering real estate." But hey, this is different real estate here. If anything, it'll go down, and people can buy more land, and then bitch about a facility being their backyard, you know? I've got the base back here. Of course, I don't ever hear, none of the local people complain. Number one, that base has made many families here have a good life. But there's nothing in this house that hasn't been moved, shaken, and rearranged, because those helicopters—the Osprey, the big planes—come right over this house, and sometimes they—because they land right back in the woods here—so sometimes this whole house is going like this, you know? I mean, I'm kind of used to at this point. But sometimes you're going, "Damn, bud, hope you don't hit my roof, you know?"

But today, there was a, I think they call them C-140, flying around here. He—it's a transport, like the parachute people drop out of it, kind of an older plane—but he was flying low. And at first, I thought it was like a small plane or something, because it was so fast. And I finally went out, I said, daggone, that's a plane. He was hauling ass around here. We have jets. We have all that, you know. And you could sit here sometime on the back porch, you can hear the—I say they're playing war, you hear the "Da da da da da!" And you go out by the bridge out here, out going to Cedar Island, and at night time, if they're out there practicing, you'll see the infrared lights through the sky, you know, go. But that has been good, and they're building more out here now, they are building on the base. Do you know what the BT-11 is? Okay, when you get across the bridge, Cedar Island, if you look over to the left, you will see a building, some towers that are way off in the marshes. That's called BT-11, that is one of the largest electronic bombing ranges on the East Coast, or especially in this area, the states, local Southern states here. They are moving all that to the base out here. So they're building on this base right now, so they'll operate that. And so that, as far as economy goes, that's good, and it's great that they're building. And you know, the young people could go very easily, but some of the young people go up to Cherry Point to work. Some of the local women work out there, it's been good jobs, very good jobs for them. So it's contractors, but the government pays them, so they still make a good living. We don't know what's going to happen to Snug Harbor, because of—it's just unknown, you know, it's empty right now. You gotta be a special—you know, like the Sea Level Inn up here, they turn into condos, that was after I moved here—and you gotta be a special person to want to live down here. Men love it, fishing, hunting, whatever. Women, what am I going to do? Unless they like to fish and whatever too.

But, you know, a lot of women don't want to come this far out. Fish houses—when I moved here in 19, or 2002, I'm thinking there was a fish house in Sea Level, there was, well, two down here, two down here. Atlantic had Dean Smith's, which is still there. Cedar Island had two. But from Davis on, I think there was nine, like Davis, Stacy, altogether. The Taylors have theirs, but it's not a retail, it's, you know, they ship everything out of here. And you got Jimmy Morris, of course, for those oysters and clams. You got that clam, another clam hatchery and stuff there on the loop at Sea Level. Then down here, this next road here, is Carlisle's, a fish house there. But again, yeah, local people, I could get in there say, hey, I want to get a pound of shrimp. Same thing with Dean, but mostly, it's shipped out of here. Then Dean is our biggest still here. But when I came here, the Fulchers here, and I actually interviewed the Fulchers—Clay Fulcher, and Michael, and Tommy—for the Museum, 2003 or 4, somewhere in there, when they were still open. And then Cedar Island, of course, there's Bradley, and their fish house, I think they're where the harbor is. But anyway, so I've seen that industry go away. And that goes back to these young boys who think they can go out there.

And now, the aquaculture, you know, raising the oysters and shrimp—and again, PBS, I was watching, and listen to this, about shrimp farms. Guess who was doing a study on growing shrimp in like, farmland, or, you know, like inland? Minnesota. Not State, not North Carolina State, but Minnesota, although NC State's been instrumental in this. So, you know, they're trying to start to grow shrimp, instead of getting it for overseas. And I saw, scrolling on my phone, and it was Walmart, all the soft shell crabs for sale. And I think it was like, the big, the I forgot what they were, they weren't jumbo, they were huge. And they were going—[yawns] I just yawn, um, when I sit still too long—but they were like 200-some, a dozen or two dozen, oh, 36, so that's what? Three dozen? Two dozen? Whatever. So, 200-some dollars, and, but I wanted to see where they came from, and there was a disclosure about how, you know, you could go online and find out where they're, you know, whatever. But I just recently saw something where they're growing, you know, the shrimp like in, well, this show with the shrimp, was showing them being grown in the, you know, Southeast Asia and places like that. Of course it was like "They give them human shit," you know, that. Well, what do you think they're eating out here in our waters? But, fish shit? But I've seen that industry go. And like I said, I've been a supporter of these fishermen. So, that's our economy.

The Red and White was open when I came here, and that was a thriving community store, and local people worked in it. That was your community. That's where you met people, and stuff like this. You could check on people, "Well, how you doing?" You know, "Oh, did you hear so and so is…" "No, I didn't know." Now, I like say, I write for the paper. I don't get, nobody—I ask these churches, "Let me know who's sick, I'll put them on the prayer list. What are you going to do? What's, when's Bible school?" I have to ask them. You know, it's like, you know, I can help you if you let me help you. But, same thing with anything, kind of going on. Now I do know this—and when I first came down here, I remember farmer Styron told me something had happened amongst the community of us. "And, I'll tell you one thing about us down here," he says, "We might cuss you out," and said, "We might cuss one another out…" He says, "We may even have some fistfights here or there. But you need somebody? We're here for you." And that's what this community is. I grew up in a community like that, in the farmland. My neighbors were black people that worked on farms and had farms, whatever. I never heard the N-word in my house. Never. Down here, that word is used a lot. When I taught Driver's Ed, young black people had never been down here. And I'll never forget this young man saying, "Miss King, we're told we're not supposed to go down there." I said, "I want you to see what it is." And we'd go, and it's after school, so, lot of time, it'd get to be getting dark and stuff. I said, "Nobody's gonna bother you." …. So that's generations, that's now their children are going to school with, you know, different races, not necessarily black. But I just didn't grow up in this environment, but you gotta see—these people have been isolated and all. And hey, I hear people tell stories about driving drunk, driving in the water, you know, crashing this, crashing that, hauling drugs with babies in the car, whatever, because they got away with it. Because, you know, I see kids on four wheelers that are so—one time I was on Cedar Island, a kid, five or six years old, has a damn four wheeler running in front of you. "Well, I did it when I was a kid!" But you didn't have the traffic when you were a kid that you have out here today! When I taught Driver's Ed, I told kids, I said, you know, I said, "Listen." I said, "The difference between when you're learning now and when I learned, we barely had cars. We didn't have any traffic. Look what you got out here, just in this parking lot." … So this is why we want you to be so careful, because it's different. It's not like when your parents drove." And a lot of kids here have four wheelers and motorcycles and stuff, and before they ever think about getting a driver's license.

But it's a different way of life. It's changing. I can tell you, it's changed in my 20 years here, that—because kids are going to school with other kids different areas, and there are more educated people moving Down East now, even though— if they're retired people, they still bring some influence in. It saddens me that when there are critical issues like this drug rehab place, or something, that the local don't want to really—yeah, when we had the meeting that time, it was, the little church was kind of full, but they had something else going on that night. That's why I'd like to have another public meeting, just to make us aware. But, you know, a lot of people go, "Well, it doesn't affect me. I don't care." And that's everywhere, too. It's—but again, when there's a tragedy—and not just because of, like the boys that were killed in the plane wreck and everything, this woman that was killed last week on the bicycle, whatever—when tragedy happens, the community does pull together for whoever, whatever. They may not agree with the people that, I mean, it's like the community I grew up in. If your neighbor needed help, you help. And there are a lot of women down here, older women that are widowed, that live in these communities now. I tell you who need to talk to, if Karen didn't say, you need to speak with Lura Hill. Lura Hill's the one who just wrote the book, Diamond something or another. She's ninety, she'll be 92, this month, and she has written and published a book. It was something Diamonds, I'm embarrassed. She is an absolutely gorgeous woman. I was at her house this morning. I made these little candle things—last year, they allowed me to scallop out on, in the sound here. And so a man down the road, I asked for, I got a five gallon bucket of these scallop shells. So I made a mirror for my new barn, but all the glue fell off, it was so hot, I gotta redo that one. But I had all these shells, I still got a half a bucket left. As a matter of fact, Anne Fulcher today, said, "Will you make some for the auction for the Sarah James?" I'll do that. But anyway, I took Miss Lura a candle holder. This one, I took one to Anne Fulcher too. That's why, when I saw James there.

But there's incredible, good people here. Don't ever miss, think what I've said about, maybe the challenges of people, they're good human beings. A lot of good human beings here, especially the older, older generation. And I've been very blessed to see some of those people, meet them, and hear them speak, and talk. But Lura is somebody you'd like, I think you should, because she's 92. What I did—again, I wrote an article with her, because—I took her from her house. She grew up in Sea Level. And this book, she's, I have it. I don't know where it is, but—I'm embarrassed, Diamonds? Something Diamonds?—she grew up in Sea Level. She grew up down on the shore, so I came to get her, to interview her for the for the paper about her book, and she's gotten, she's sold quite a few, and she's got book signings, and stuff, but we read down here, and so it was so cool, because she would go like—now, and what she did, she showed me places that were in this book, you know, and it's not her life, but it is her life. So she go, "Well, that's the path we'd go through to that house there." Yeah, it was great. It was just great. And there was somebody else I thought, who you need, who was that? Oh, God, her for, definitely her. It was somebody on Cedar Island, who was at Cedar Island? And see, my cooking show—which I hate, the last one I did—is I went to Debbie Willis, Sea Level. They were all in their 80s and 90s, and I, something happened to the film. We were never able to, all those interviews were gone. I hated that. There was somebody else I talked to, I don't know, I'd had to think about that. But Lura is one of them, and that's L, U, R, A Hill. Lura Hill. But she's beautiful, she's a beautiful woman. I mean, she's, you know, but somebody like her really has seen the changes. She was a little girl, she's not, and you're talking, you know, what, 70-some years. I've got 20. I only have 22 years here. Boat building, course, that's Harkers Island. I'm not really, many, I think most people, fishermen got their boats from down there, I think, and from around Harkers Island and those areas. Nicky Harvey in Davis, he'd be a good one for you talk to. He's the one that started the crab pot Christmas trees, and he's from that community. Nicky Harvey would be good.

I'm trying to drive down the road, and think about who you need to talk to, and I can't. I had the opportunity, there was a judge here called Pretlow Winborne, he's deceased, and died about four years, five years ago. Now, Pretlow was a civil judge in Raleigh, North Carolina, and had to place in Oriental, and then they came to Atlantic, and had a house down here.

If you go to the harbor, and you see all that big house over there on the left and everything, that was Pretlow's. Then when you go Marsh Road, there's a big house, all wooded and everything, that was Pretlow's. Pretlow was so smart, so intelligent, and you walked in his house. He was always reading a book, and he always had a crossword puzzle on his table, dining table, and he was a mess, too. We became really dear, dear friends. And, had he not—when I moved down here, I was what, 60? 60. I guess, no. Shoot, I had to be in my 50s, I'm 72, so 52, I guess, when I came here? 53? And but, a friend of mine from the courthouse had said, "You need to meet Pretlow. You need to meet Pretlow." So I'll never forget it, so, I was working for that fishing magazine, like writing and selling ads. And I called him on, it was cold, rainy winter day, and I called him, I said, "My name is Ruthie King." I said, "Craig Lewis, from the courthouse, said I needed to meet you." I said, "Would this afternoon be good?" "Yeah, you can come on down." So we're chit chatting, this, that, and the other, and he said something about, I said, "Well, do you still practice law?" He said, "Well, I don't like to." He's real gruff. He said, "I don't like to." He says, "But that crowd, that courthouse always sending people here I may have to help." I said, "Well, I don't need your help." "You don't need me as attorney?" I said, "No, sir, I don't." He said, "Oh, okay." And it was just like we, but we had this banter. It was this fabulous banter back and forth, and he was so funny. One of the first times I went with the motel down here, the restaurant was there, and he picked me up in his old—he always had his Buick, and the windows were so nasty, and his dog was staying with him, traveling with him, and I couldn't even see from my house. Yeah, I was living here. No, I was living in Atlantic at the time and was in apartments before I bought this property. But from there, I was going, "Pretlow!" This is what the man said to me, I said "Pretlow!" I said, "How can you see with these windows so dirty?" He said, "You don't like nasty, do ya?" I said, "Well, not really." He said, "I guess you want to see, you wouldn't want to see the crack of my nasty ass!" I said, "No, I would not. I wouldn't want to see it if it was clean." So that rapport became even better. And we—the Driftwood was still open in Cedar Island—we'd go over there, and we'd go have dinner. And I said—they made those great lemon pies—I said, "Pretlow, you want a piece?" "No, I'm not going to." I said, so I'd get a piece of pie, I said, "Here, you want a bite?" "No, you're just trying to kill me. You just, you want me to take Viagra and eat sweets and kill me!" I said, "No, I don't want to kill you, and I don't want you to take Viagra!" But it was just, he was so smart, he was brilliant, and, but he got started getting sick. And I always said, and I'd go like, "Pretlow, marry me!" "God damn it, Ruthie, I'm not going to marry you!" Sorry about using the GD word.

So, I was heading out of town on a Monday night, and his daughter called me and said, "I just want you to know, Daddy's in the hospital and that he's, it's pretty bad." So I went to the hospital, and saw him and everything, and they left the room. I don't, I didn't ask her to but they left the room, and I said, "Pretlow," I said, "I'll be back Thursday or Friday." I said, "Get your ass out of here." I said, "When I get back, we're going to get married. I mean, we are going to get married." And so, that weekend, I don't know, I didn't see him but they moved him down here, to Snug Harbor at the time, when it was still open. One of his daughters called me, she said, "Daddy's upset that you didn't marry him this weekend." I said, "Oh, my God," I was back on board. So when I

came home that weekend, I had bought me some white roses, you know, fake roses. I bought me a piece of tulle, white tulle, and went down there. I said, “We're going to get married!” I said, so we just took pictures like we had done it. He had this pair of bedroom slippers that were duct taped. The man had money, but he loved him shoes and had, they were duct taped because they had split, and whatever. And so, he was sitting outside, but it was his son-in-law, he said, “Give me my shoes, my damn duct tape shoes.” So there's pictures, I have it on my computer, of me and him, and those, on our wedding day and stuff. So when he died, they took those shoes at the memorial service, because he wore them for years. So he was just, and some of these people, like I say, that I've met, just wonderful, wonderful human beings.

That's the beauty of Down East. No matter what the future is, or does, it's the beauty of the people. And yes, people moving in, like me, I'm from off, a lot of people. Now with the grocery store closed—you have the Dollar General, but it's not like it was—the grocery store, because everybody worked in there. And these are local people, but they've, most of these people have moved in here, so they're not born and raised here in this community. But it's, you know, in the grocery store, there was room to chit chat. Now, and you go in there, you get in, and get out, but you do see people, and I see people down there. I belong to an organization called SAME, it's the Society of American Military Engineers, through my work. And so I get to go on the bases, and I get to see things that you wouldn't see. I've been at Cherry Point, watching drones being flown, and land. A drone does not land on the ground. They're flying, and there's a pole with a big hook on it, and they hook those drones. I have been on the bases, a lot on Camp Lejeune, seen those things, but I've been in, where the simulators are, you know, like where they train to fly the helicopters. And I was standing one day, by the Osprey, and it was in use. And this the base of that cone is 30 feet below, and I'm talking, it's as round as this table it’s, like this stainless steel pipe that comes up, so and it can go like this and like that, you know. And I was standing there, and that thing tilted like, it wasn't going to hit me, because we're roped off, but it scared me to death. But this is how military learns how to fly, and you know. So, trust me, I've seen a lot of stuff. And but, I'm involved in their STEM camp that they do, the Marine Corps, through this organization, we did the Marine Corps STEM camp at Camp Lejeune. And so I'm there, and we were there, it started June 23, and that first day when all the kids come—we had about 50, we had 60 kids this year—across, from the United States, rising seniors, and they live on the base for a week. They work with the engineers on the base for a week. They learn how to build, and, but I do—we do hamburgers, hot dogs—but I do a shrimp boil for them, for about 100 people, that Sunday. So these, I'm involved in—and I sell compost to the bases so, both, and that's why I'm with SAME, is because that's a networking thing, you know, because you're working with construction companies, engineers, etc.

But I've got compost on every base in eastern North Carolina, which is pretty cool. I'd like to have more. They were, you know, they were rocking and rolling, and these bases were really building 2016, 15, 16, 17, 18? A lot. But in the, again, you gotta educate people. Why do you want this out here? Because—and Fort Bragg was the first one—because I've been going to meetings, through SAME, and meeting people. Range fields, the company that was doing the range fields, because the state was on them about—when they do maneuvers, all that vegetation gets disturbed. And that's thing with storm water, and compost, is because once you've improved that soil, your vegetation will come back up. So that was my first project, was the big range field out there at Fort Bragg, and, I sure do get off the subject a lot. So what else do you want to know? Talked about the older people, and our economy here.

TH: Let's see, gosh, you've talked about so much. We wanted to ask you a little bit more about the flooding, too, here? Because you said a little bit about it, but when did you start to see it flooding at high tides, and king tides? And has it gotten more severe, over the years?

RK: Definitely.

TH: Okay.

RK: Definitely. You know, hurricane flooding is one thing, but the king tides—and I will show you when you leave here, you're welcome to take pictures if you want to—but the last, I just had that little trench dug, there by the driveway, because this, when we're having these winter rains and stuff, it was holding water out front here so bad that, you know, that was all grass, but I cut that path through there. It's coming back because it's been dry, but I wanted that water out of there. So number one, high tides is bringing that marsh in here. Now I'm telling you, the Merkle bushes, all these Yaupons were to the road when it, when I first started letting it grow up. And I've got that path through there, the serpentine path through there, but, you know, I just looked the other day, and I see a little bit of green on some of those out front, but it's, you know, if I don't try to do something, I'll have marshes up here to the house. I don't mind that, but they're going to come to the house, you know, if it keeps doing that. So I believe in natural growth, and if you look around here, I've tried to let as much natural growth come in here as I possibly can. This area over here that I've had cleared—I had to put a septic tank, and stuff like that—I am debating, because I just, these reeds I have back here in the back have to be controlled. If I don't, they'll be on my porch. But bamboo, I'm reading about bamboo, and see a lot of places, even in the mountains of North Carolina have bamboo, I'm sure you see it all around you. But up around the farm, there's bamboo. And I've been thinking about maybe trying to do some bamboo here, because it's supposedly, it really captures a lot of carbon. That's what I'm reading about, and there's different kinds of bamboo. This is a type of bamboo, but it's more like a reed I guess, back here, has a stem like a bamboo—and a friend of mine gave me that from Oriental—but if you don't control it, and the thing with bamboo, you gotta control it. So, what's going to happen here on this property? I don't know. I mean, I've got the marshes over there. They're doing. I tell you something I've just noticed, is my driveway has caved in down here by the road, over the pipe. And I just have noticed that in the last like, last week, went, "Damn!" So it's caved in. Now, is that coming from the water off the road? Or, I don't know, but that's a little concerning to me. Again, they won't let us cut the needle grass in the ditches, which will help the water flow, but they'll cut them down, so the road would go away, you know.

My house, I had, all that was, and that was full of, you know, trees. The Yaupons, they'll not get huge, but you know, the Merkle bushes, and all that stuff, that was solid out there to the road. I'm hoping this little trench will help drain this out front some. But after Florence, all this, you really couldn't see me in here. It's not that I wanted—I want birds. This is starting to come back up now, okay? Back here, I call this kind of my tropical, look at that, but it's—I got banana trees back there, you know, things like palms—but, a storm come through here, and it can knock it all down in a heartbeat. Be gone. Bam, done. So what I see on the roads, I mean, that that's concerning, but I've already talked about that. I think the state could do better with control. Because one of the, one engineer over the state, made a comment. He said, "Well, you need a place for a car to pull over." I said, "Correct." I said, "But you don't have to cut the grass down to the water, you know." And you got people that bitch about the grass, but don't cut down there, and again, it would help clean what goes into our water. Cedar

Island is kind of used to the high tides, you know, trying to, you know, somebody says, you know, you'll see on Facebook, “Hey, can I get home? Is water off the road?” or “Can I leave Cedar Island? Has anybody left?”

And I've been over there one time, and it was February, one of those freaky storms that came through in February, and I got a truck. I had a different truck at that time, and me and a couple friends went over there. We ended up having to spend the night. Power went off. It was awful, cold. And when we went over there, the water had gotten up to the bumper. So I'm driving through, and then it just got higher and higher. So I mean, there's, and that was not a hurricane. That was in February. I believe it was Super Bowl night. So it was like in January, first of February. But those people are kind of used to it, because there's no ditches over there, for drainage or anything. But around here, now you go into Atlantic, supposedly where the school and everything is in Atlantic is some of the highest ground in eastern Carteret County, is what I've been told. But when you get by Drum Inlet, that drops down, and like say, I couldn't get here till 10:30, 11, o'clock the next morning, tide had to go down. But I tell you what, nor'easters are full, those king tides. This property over here is water. That hay field behind me is water. These yards down here, water. I mean, it's lakes. I don't mean just a puddle here, puddle there. It is solid water. And I have seen that over and over again. More so now, you know, used to when I first came in here, 22 years ago, here or there, but it is. This past year, you'll see where—used to it was grass growing all out there—now you'll see where it was really further out, the grass has moved in there now, this summer, but it really, I'm just going, you know, I'm losing yard here, and grass isn't growing out there. It's coming back, because it's been dry enough to, and maybe I'm hoping that little trench will help drain some of that water, but that little bridge I've got out there, I mean, and there's a bench in there, I could be on that bench, and never see a car go by. And now it's open, you see the bench. So that's happened, in, I'm going to say, the last 10 years for sure. I'm working on it, you know, the last 10 years, and when Bertha came, I mean, not Bertha, Florence. Florence was probably the, destroyed a lot out there. So when was Florence? Was that?

LJ: 2018.

RK: Yeah, okay, that got a, that really destroyed a lot of natural growth I had, and vegetation.

TH: And it's not coming back?

RK: Didn’t come back. Well it’s because it's marshes, saltwater is coming in. But see, when I put this house up, I brought in sand to build it up. So where this house is, it kind of goes like this anyway, because, and then I put compost on top too. So like say, there's probably five inches of compost out here, you know. But, and then this property I bought, back in those woods there is marsh, too.

TH: And so, the septic in this area, in general, and Sea Level—how is it faring for people? Do they, have they been raising things?

RK: New houses, yes. That’s just like, I've I put in a septic tank for the camper and the barn, but this house here, when I can afford it, is going to go to that new septic tank. I have a very old septic tank. It's about size of this table here, and there is that drain field. It's probably gone forever. I've had it pumped, I've been here 22 years, I've had it pumped down three times, maybe. And I was told early on that—and if we have, like, lots and lots,

like, in one of those heavy, heavy rains, I can smell, and I'm here by myself, I you know, I can smell some sewer. So I know, I want to, my next big money project, because I'll have to get a, somehow a pump, to pump it over there to that one. But I want to do that as soon as I can. Cause that way, you know, if I sell the property whatever, it's all going to be legit, but I don't want my stuff going into the ditches here either. No. So, you know, speaking of drugs, we test our compost for—we have to have it tested, by law, being compost—so we get a report back. It's called the—my brain has just stopped—STA report, it's Seal of Testing Assurance certificate, but it's tested for salmonella, fecal matter, chemicals, or, I mean, minerals, but for drugs. And never thought about this, but you got big drugs, and people peeing or pooping, and that can get into solid waste. Ever thought about that? I mean, I never did. And so, we are tested for that, to make sure that—I mean, we test our compost, we have, well, we have to! Yeah, you're growing stuff in it, whatever, edible stuff and so, and I never thought about that, but until I got into this business and getting these reports back and, you know, and then learning about how that that can affect, like a city, Raleigh, for instance.

So you gotta, it's pretty, it's pretty wild what we're doing to one another, truthfully. And that's why, down here, I mean, it's pretty nice, because we—I'm not saying we can't have a school shooting, and I hope we never do, but that's unfortunately, part of our lives—but I mean, as far as the, our pollution is very little, very minor compared to most places. I think some of the younger people are better about not throwing shit in the water out here, and on the side of the road. People always want to throw trash out the car. Now, I'll call your ass up in a heartbeat. I followed—when I lived in town—I followed some car off Atlantic Beach, and they were throwing beer cans, this, that, and the other out. It was on the beach road, and I got the license, it turned out it was, it was a, some kid from, he was driving his Daddy's car, and his Daddy was somebody big in Goldsboro, or whatever. And I called, you know, I called the Atlantic Beach police, and I found out who it was, and I called them too. I think I talked to the daddy. I said, you know, and after I thought, I said, "Oh, my God, they're gonna come burn my house down at Morehead, or toilet paper it or something." But, you know, there's no sense in it. And if I see somebody drop something, I'll say, "I'll pick that up for you. I'll take it to the trash can." You know? And I'm adamant about somebody putting a damn cigarette butt in my grass out here. And the other day, and I meant to have a bucket, it's a sand bucket. So I got a plant. I planted it, it died. I said, "Use that over there for your cigarette butts." Said, "Well I put them in,"—and this is a kid that worked for me—"I put them on pocket." I said, "Good, take them home with you. Don't put them in." When I first started hiring this crew that cuts my grass and stuff, I pulled them all aside—and this is years ago, they've been with me about eight years—I said, "Let me tell you something. You see that right there?" "Uh-uh." "You smoke. You do whatever you want to. Do not, under any circumstance, do you drop those cigarette butts in my yard." Ain't seen one since. So people do that, that drives me crazy. Why do people, you know, stopping at a stoplight and do this. Dump it in your yard! People just don't—I never saw my momma and daddy throw something out the window—never! And we didn't either, you know. But all that said, you know, we've got fairly clean roads down here. And you know, we do have communities that, you know, now that try to, you know, have the pickups and stuff. It's a great, great area to live in. You know, it's not too busy.

I do believe the newcomers that are coming here probably have nice properties elsewhere, so they try to, they're trying to keep their places nice. So that's good, that's a benefit. Now, do they bring money to here? They're paying taxes, but that doesn't really come to us that are living here full time. James Fulcher, oh, James is the one, you need to talk to James. He, I don't know if he'd have time between now and the tournament, but

James, James is the one who, you know, his family had the Red and White and everything, and he bought that building. And his goal, has Pam or Karen told you about his goal to, with the building down here, the old store? So he's got a section of it, and his goal is to have a community place. He's hoping, at some point in time, to have where people could go in there and have computers. He's already got the wires going through, yeah, he's put in the gas. He's put in the ice. So, I mean, you either had to go to Cedar Island, or you had to go to Davis. There's gas here now. So James is trying to bring back his community he grew up in. He's hoping maybe one day to have that building where people could go in there and cook, and sell their goods. You know, have, like, a commercial kitchen. He wants to be able to have, maybe some art. He wants to do art in there. People bring in old pictures and things. So James would be a good one to catch. They're going to get cranked up here for this fishing tournament. And I have his number.

TH: That would be awesome, thank you. I think we—do we have them on the list, or?

LJ: You know, I'm not sure, I can check.

TH: Karen has a long list of people, and he may be on there, but he also may not be

LJ: It sounds familiar.

RK: Does she have Miss Lura on there too?

TH: No.

LJ: Yeah, we haven't heard.

RK: I'll get you her number, and stuff.

TH: Yeah, that would be wonderful, thank you.

LJ: I feel like, one more question, we're almost at like, three hours being here!

TH: Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry—time has just flown!

RK: Well, I've just been running my mouth, it has nothing to do with this project!

LJ: We just don't want to take up too much more of your time. So, I feel like, we kind of end off these interviews with like, asking people like, what their hope is for the future. And we feel like, there's a lot of power in what people hope for, and we just want to know, like, what do you—like, what do you see happening?

RK: …. I would like to see this community grow, in every positive way it could grow, meaning some jobs for the younger generation coming up. I feel certain, at some point in time, they're going to close this school out here. That's coming, because a lot of people moving here are older, and their children are gone, and whatever. What

are they going to do with that beautiful, old building? You know, is there any game plan, future plan for that building? What could it become? It could become a community center, by all means. But would they, would the county put the money to have it done? Young people? What can keep young people entertained, so they don't have to drive an hour away, and get in a car wreck or something? What are positive moves for our younger generation, that they don't have to leave here to make a living? And as far as environmental goes, my hope and dream is that people will wake up, before it's too late. You know, we already see a drop in fishing. And we see a drop in crabs, and a lot of that's environmental, the heat, the water temperature is staying warm, year-round. There's things happening. They're not happening big time, right now. And of course, everybody's blaming this, that and the other. But a lot of time—and don't put this down—but a lot of times it's what the local people are doing. They are destroying. Please don't put that down. But you know, that that's my hope, is that—the hope is that is—and I think, every generation, every country, especially ours—we have to hope in our younger generation to do better than we did. You know, I came up in the hippie time. You know, we were going to change the world. We were going to make things better. But now, we drive cars and we got—I don't, but, you know—my generation now, wants a million dollar home, they want brand new cars, they want to buy everything there is to buy, whether they need it or not. It's greed, and greed is affecting our planet, and our world, and our lives, period. I mean, I believe that with all my heart. And you know, you got 30-year-old people, kids, just out of college, and because of their family, or credit, whatever, they're, a half a million dollar home on the beachfront. There's a lot of 30, 40-year-olds, 50-year-olds, that have what their parents worked their whole life for, and that's great. Don't get me wrong. I'm for, and I'm for progress, don't get me wrong. One of the things that bothers me about Down East, and has, you go into this little community of Atlantic, North Carolina, it's like the village of Ocracoke Village, that I fell in love with in 1975. Got your little dirt streets, those old houses. What I wish Down East would do, Marshallberg, Davis, all these old homes. There's a house going to the harbor, on the left, it's a brand new house, but it's built conducive with the community. It's built like one of the old shotgun houses. So, but there's no, I hate to see down in these little communities, a pink beach house, five stories high. There's no governance at all for any of the building and construction. Progress, yes! Build, yes! Make it conducive to these old communities. That's a wish of mine, and has been for a long time, because I, when I met Miss Lura today, I was looking around these old houses, and I thought, "I love it, but I don't want to live in an old house anymore." I grew up in an old farmhouse. This is the first new house I've ever lived in, in my life. Apartments, everything was old. Always had old house, apartments, and old houses, hardwood floors, all that stuff. But that, that I wish we could do. You know, and like I say, it's the younger generation that's got to do it, so, okay!

LJ: Perfect!

RK: Yeah, well, I need to go outside. And would you like to meet my rabbits?

LJ: Of course!

TH: We would love that.

RK: Because I need to feed them.

LJ: Yeah!

TH: All right, I will stop it off here.